

Selected Poetry of William Blake

Reading Warm-up B

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

William Blake was a poet who lived during the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries. He was constantly striving to combine art with poetry, and the result that he achieved is a delight to read and to view.

It did not take Blake's parents long to grasp that he had an artistic ability that needed to be developed, so they sent him to study art. Blake learned engraving and practiced it for many years. Blake combined his interests in poetry and engraving in books that he created.

Blake was not meek or shy when it came to publishing his work. He published most of the work that he created himself; he developed a special method and invention that allowed him to design and print illustrations and words at the same time. The results are considered startling and original, as the art weaves in and about the words that are on the printed page. The process took a great deal of muscle work, however, and Blake must have developed strong sinews as a result.

While Blake published frequently and was associated with many famous intellectuals of his day, he lived for most of his life in poverty, a dread condition of desperation. The invention he used to engrave and print words at the same time was very expensive.

Fame was also a distant dream. During his life, Blake's poetry was not popular. However, Blake did not sulk about this problem; instead of worrying and pouting about it, he continued to follow his interests. Today, people take Blake's work very seriously, and he is regarded as one of the greatest poets and engravers of his time. His work is now considered by many to be immortal because it will never die as long as people study it and enjoy it.

1. Underline the phrase that tells what Blake was striving to achieve. What is a synonym for **striving**?
2. Underline the phrase that tells what Blake's parents came to grasp about him. Tell what **grasp** means in this particular sentence.
3. Circle the word that means about the same as meek. How does a **meek** person act?
4. Underline the words that tell why Blake probably developed strong sinews. What might happen if a swimmer injured the **sinews** in her arms?
5. Circle the word that tells what dread condition Blake lived in. What is a word that means about the same as **dread** and could be used in this sentence without changing its meaning?
6. Underline the sentence that explains why fame was a distant dream for Blake. Use **distant** in a sentence.
7. Circle the words that tell what sulk means. How do people look when they **sulk**?
8. Circle the words that tell what immortal means. Give an example of an **immortal** character in literature.